

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00
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AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 10894

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, SREF, EK, NI
SUBJECT: EQUATORIAL GUINEA REFUGEE SITUATION IN NIGERIA

REF: STATE 219749

1. UNHCR REFUGEE COUNSELLOR IN LAGOS INFORMS US THAT ONLY TWELVE REFUGEES FROM EQUATORIAL GUINEA HAVE OFFICIALLY REGISTERED WITH HIS OFFICE. ALL OF THESE ARE REPORTED TO BE WORKING, IN SOME CASES ILLEGALLY, ON THE NIGERIAN ECONOMY AND SO ARE INELIGIBLE FOR NORMAL REFUGEE ASSISTANCE OF 31 NAIRA (U.S. \$47) A MONTH. MOST OF THE TWELVE DESCRIBED THEMSELVES AS STUDENTS AND WANTED TO PURSUE THEIR EDUCATION IN SPAIN, A GOAL WHICH UNHCR IS UNABLE TO ASSIST. REFUGEE COUNSELLOR IS AWARE OF ONLY ONE REFUGEE TRAVEL DOCUMENT ISSUED BY UNHCR IN LAGOS TO A REFUGEE FROM EQUATORIAL GUINEA.

2. REFUGEE COUNSELLOR SAID THE REFUGEE PROBLEM IS ACTUALLY SOMEWHAT WORSE THAN OFFICIAL FIGURES INDICATE. CONVERSATIONS WITH REGISTERED EQUATORIAL GUINEANS AND AN "INFORMAL SURVEY" CONDUCTED EARLIER THIS YEAR LEAD HIM TO BELIEVE THERE ARE ABOUT 100 REFUGEES IN LAGOS ALONE. UNHCR ESTIMATES THAT 30 PERCENT OF
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THESE ARE DEPENDENT ON NIGERIAN FRIENDS WHILE THE REMAINDER ARE EMPLOYED. UNHCR HAS ALSO RECEIVED UNVERIFIED REPORTS THAT UP TO 100 MORE REFUGEES ARE SCATTERED THROUGHOUT NIGERIA'S EASTERN REGION. OF THE UNREGISTERED REFUGEES, MOST ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE ENTERED NIGERIA ILLEGALLY, MANY OF THEM AS PART OF THE EXODUS OF NIGERIANS EXPELLED FROM EQUATORIAL GUINEA EARLY IN 1977. ACCORDING TO UNHCR, NIGERIAN IMMIGRATION DOES NOT WELCOME ARRIVALS

FROM EQUATORIAL GUINEA AND AS A RESULT MANY REFUGEES IN THE COUNTRY MAY NOT BE REGISTERING OUT OF FEAR OF ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION AGAINST THEM, ALTHOUGH UNHCR CONSIDERS SUCH ACTION HIGHLY UNLIKELY. REFUGEE COUNSELLOR SCOFFED AT REPORT IN AFRICA (MARCH 1978) THAT 5,000 REFUGEES FROM EQUATORIAL GUINEA ARE CURRENTLY IN NIGERIA.

3. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE NO STUDY OF REFUGEE PROBLEM HAS BEEN CONDUCTED. SUCH A STUDY WOULD APPEAR DIFFICULT AND POSSIBLY UNPRODUCTIVE IN NIGERIA AT PRESENT TIME. UNHCR DISPLAYS LITTLE ENTHUSIASM FOR PROBLEM. BY THE SAME TOKEN IT PROBABLY WOULD NOT BE USEFUL TO DEVOTE MORE RESOURCES TO THE PROBLEM IN NIGERIA, WHICH APPEARS MINIMAL COMPARED WITH THE REFUGEE SITUATION IN CAMEROON AND GABON, UNLESS FMG AND UNHCR DEVELOP GREATER INTEREST.
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